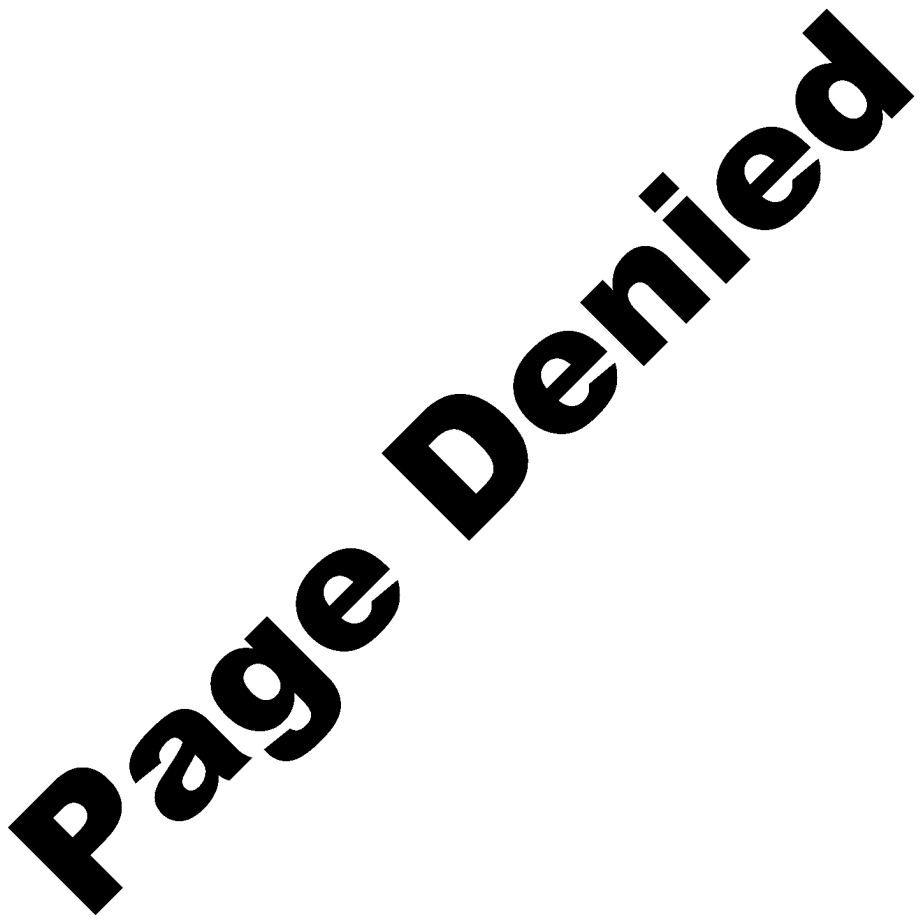

Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies

717 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10022
212 759-1053

Cable—Aspeninst New York
Telex—710 581 5508
(ASPENINST NYK)

March 2, 1983

STAT

William Casey
Director
C.I.A.
C.I.A. Building
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Casey:

On behalf of the Aspen Institute and [redacted] its president, I have STAT agreed to organize a study of ethical issues in current foreign policy concerns. I found during my government work that many of our daily problems had profound ethical implications, but that there was rarely time to consider them. Yet, as the Catholic Bishops have recently reminded us, we ignore such issues at our peril.

Since returning to Harvard, I have been teaching and thinking about ethics and international relations, and would now like to assemble a small group to discuss a broader Aspen program involving the issues discussed below.

International politics is hard ground for implanting moral arguments for a number of obvious reasons. Different cultures have different views of right and wrong; there is no overall government to balance the claims of order and justice, and there is an extra complexity in causation that arises from having to consider three levels of analysis (the individual, the state, the system of states). Nonetheless, moral arguments are constantly used in international relations, and we can judge them by their logic, their consistency, and their consequences.

There are (at least) three major clusters of issues (and sub-issues) around which somewhat different moral arguments have developed: the basic security dilemma related to balance of power; collective vs. individual rights and intervention across borders; and issues of distributive justice from a global perspective.

I think the most fruitful current issue for close analysis is the role of nuclear weapons. Can we consider such weapons morally justifiable if "the fate of the earth" is at stake? Are there real alternatives to nuclear deterrence? If not, are there different ethical considerations in choices among doctrines and force postures (as was sometimes asserted during the SALT debate)? If nuclear deterrence has produced prudence in U.S.-Soviet relations, would it not do so for other countries? What are the moral grounds for discouraging proliferation? These questions only begin to illustrate the range of issues that can be explored in this area.

A second area of concern is intervention across state borders that affects individual and collective rights. States can be seen as a collective form of individual rights if citizens have developed a common life within state boundaries. Such rights deserve respect as do individual rights. But what do we do when the two types of rights come into conflict? Are we justified in focusing only on individual human rights? To what extent? What

L306

forms of intervention or involvement across state borders are justifiable and what are not? What conditions (genocide, preventive war, balancing prior interventions, etc.) justify which types of intervention? Again, these questions illustrate only the tip of the iceberg of problems congealed under this rubric.

A third cluster of problems relates to distributive justice—who gets what in the world. National boundaries define inequality as well as liberty, and equality is a prime value of twentieth century world culture—such as it is. If we posit a veil of ignorance a la Rawls, to reach a theory of justice, why do we assume we would know our nationality? If we would not, we would certainly favor greater international equality than now exists. But this cosmopolitan approach which challenges the moral justification of national boundaries flies in the face of the way the world is organized. Taken literally, it could lead to conflict, war, and a disorder that would defeat prospects of justice. Are there intermediate positions? Do different degrees of transnational interdependence have implications for intermediate positions? Should some issues related to basic human needs (food, shelter, health) be treated differently than others in consideration of distributive justice? How can such distinctions inform policy choices? How can they be communicated in a democracy?

Given the current resurgence in concern about the morality of nuclear weapons, I suggest starting with the nuclear issue. Questions that I propose for discussion are the following:

1. Why the current resurgence of concern in the U.S. and Europe?

2. How has the debate changed since the early '60s?

3. The ethics of Deterrence: Intent vs. Consequences

4. The Ethics of Doctrine and Force Postures

5. Non-Use and No First-Use Debates

I now write to invite you to join a small group for discussion and dinner, beginning 4:30 p.m. on April 4, 1983. We will meet in the Board Room at the Folger Shakespeare Library, 201 East Capitol Street, Washington, D.C. The entrance is at the corner of East Capitol and Second Streets. We shall adjourn in time to catch the last shuttle. I hope you will join us. If you are coming from outside Washington and can cover your transportation costs, we will be grateful since this exploratory phase is not funded. If not, the Institute will reimburse you for travel expenses.

Please respond to [redacted] Senior Fellow of the Aspen Institute, 717 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10022, 212/759-1053. STAT

Sincerely,

[redacted] STAT